You’re hired!

Tricia Chatterton, BPP’s training guru, on apprenticeships and why SME firms should consider them

Q We don’t hire trainee solicitors but have heard a lot about apprentices recently. Is this something I ought to know more about?

A Many firms would like to grow their own pool of graduate talent but don’t hire trainees because it’s too expensive to fund them. Embracing apprenticeships could be the answer. The apprenticeship levy can provide full or part government funding to employers (regardless of size), allowing them to train their own talent. Some firms are uncomfortable with the idea of taking on 18-year-olds fresh from their A-level studies, but those that have report high levels of satisfaction with their motivated and high-calibre paralegal and solicitor apprentices. But with the imminent opportunity of being able to draw funds from the levy pot, it will be obvious when apprentice candidates come to meet you if you’re lukewarm to the concept. They will need to know you are offering apprenticeships because you believe in them. With many more firms aiming to recruit talent at apprenticeship level, early planning is essential to get the best people.

Q If we do start to hire apprentices how will we manage the requirement to give them sufficient time to study?

A The government is clear that an apprentice must spend a minimum of 20% of their employment on off-the-job training. Most employers comply with this by allowing a day a week for study, which is simple for everyone to adhere to. Obviously having apprentices all heading out on the same day might be an issue but a good training provider will be flexible around the days that apprentices study and whether they study at university, remotely at home, or from the office. Good planning with your provider should ensure that you can successfully manage your apprentice workloads accordingly and put a brilliant framework around them so that their growth and your expectations are well managed. BPP has listened to the profession and is currently developing a number of new programmes including a graduate entry solicitor apprenticeship for those firms who prefer to continue to recruit from a graduate pool.

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ABOUT

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